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The War with Mexico - 1846

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FROM

*Mrs. Abbott Low*

*moffat*





**SPEECH**

OF

**MR. CALHOUN, OF SOUTH CAROLINA,**

ON

**HIS RESOLUTIONS**

IN REFERENCE TO

**THE WAR WITH MEXICO.**

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**DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, JANUARY 4, 1848.**

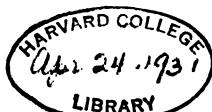
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Mrs. Abbot Low Miffat

## SPEECH OF MR. CALHOUN,

*In the Senate of the United States, January 4, 1848, upon his Resolutions.*

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*Resolved*, That to conquer Mexico and to hold it, either as a province or to incorporate it in the Union, would be inconsistent with the avowed object for which the war has been prosecuted; a departure from the settled policy of the Government; in conflict with its character and genius; and in the end, subversive of our free and popular institutions.

*Resolved*, That no line of policy in the further prosecution of the war should be adopted which may lead to consequences so disastrous.

Mr. CALHOUN said: in offering, Senators, these resolutions for your consideration, I am governed by the reasons which induced me to oppose the war; and by which I have been governed since it was sanctioned by Congress. In alluding to my opposition to the war, I do not intend to touch on the reasons which governed me on that occasion, further than is necessary to explain my motives upon the present.

I then opposed the war, not only because it might have been easily avoided; not only because the President had no authority to order a part of the disputed territory in possession of the Mexicans to be occupied by our troops; not only because I believed the allegations upon which Congress sanctioned the war untrue, but from high considerations of policy; because I believed it would lead to many and serious evils to the country, and greatly endanger its free institutions. But, after the war was declared, by authority of the Government, I acquiesced in what I could not prevent, and which it was impossible for me to arrest; and I then felt it to be my duty to limit my efforts to giving such direction to the war as would, as far as possible, prevent the evils and danger with which it threatened the country and its institutions. For this purpose, at the last session, I suggested to the Senate the policy of adopting a defensive line, and for the same purpose I now offer these resolutions. This, and this only, is the motive which governs me on this occasion. I am moved by no personal or party considerations. My object is neither to sustain the Executive nor to strengthen the opposition, but simply to discharge an important duty to the country. In doing so, I shall express my opinion on all points with the freedom and boldness which becomes an independent Senator, who has nothing to ask from the Government or from the People. But when I come to notice those points on which I differ from the President, I shall do it with all the decorum, which is due to the Chief Magistrate of the Union.

I suggested a defensive line because, in the first place, I believed that the only certain mode of terminating the war successfully was to take indemnity in our own hands by occupying defensively, with our military force, a portion of the Mexican territory, which we might deem ample for indemnity; and, in the next, because I believed it would prevent a great sacrifice of life and property; but, above all, because I believed that it was the only way we could avoid the <sup>war</sup> ~~great danger to our institutions against which these resolutions are intended to guard.~~ The President took a different view. He recommended a vigorous

prosecution of the war—not for conquest—that was emphatically disavowed—but for the purpose of conquering peace—that is, to compel Mexico to sign a treaty ceding sufficient territory to indemnify the claims of our citizens and of the country for the expenses of the war. I could not approve of this policy. I opposed it, among other reasons, because I believed there was no certainty that the object intended to be effected would be accomplished, let the war be ever so successful. Congress thought differently, and granted ample provisions, in men and money, for carrying out the policy recommended by the President. It has now been fully tested under the most favorable circumstances. It has been as successful as the most sanguine hope of the Executive could have anticipated. Victory after victory followed in rapid succession, without a single reverse. Santa Anna repelled and defeated with all his forces at Buena Vista—Vera Cruz, with its castle, captured—the heights of Cerra Gorda triumphantly carried—Jalappa, Perote, and Puebla occupied—and after many triumphant victories under the walls of Mexico, its gates opened to us, and put us in possession of the Capital. But what has all these splendid achievements accomplished? Has the avowed object of the war been attained? Have we conquered peace? Have we compelled Mexico to sign a treaty? Have we obtained indemnity? No. Not a single object contemplated by the campaign has been effected; and what is worse, our difficulties are greater now than they were at the commencement, and the objects sought more difficult to be accomplished. To what is this complete failure to be attributed? Not to our army. It has done all that skill and gallantry could accomplish. It is to be attributed to the policy pursued. The Executive aimed at indemnity in a wrong way. Instead of taking it into our own hands, when we had territory in our possession, ample to cover the claims of our citizens and the expenses of the war, he sought it indirectly through a treaty with Mexico. He thus put it out of our own power, and under the control of Mexico, to say whether we should have indemnity or not, and thereby enabled her to defeat the whole object of the campaign by simply refusing to treat with us. Owing to this mistaken policy, after a most successful and brilliant campaign, involving an expenditure not less, probably, than forty millions of dollars, and the sacrifice, by the sword and by disease, of many valuable lives, probably not less than six or seven thousand, nothing is left but the glory which our army has acquired.

But as an apology for all this, it is insisted that the maintenance of a defensive line would have involved as great a sacrifice as the campaign itself. The President and the Secretary of War have assigned many reasons for entertaining this opinion. I have examined them with care. This is not the proper occasion to discuss them, but I must say, with all due deference, they are, to my mind, utterly fallacious; and to satisfy your minds that such is the case, I will place the subject in a single point of view.

The line proposed by me, to which I suppose their reasons were intended to be applied, would be covered in its whole extent, from the Pacific ocean to the Passo del Norte, on the Rio Grande, by the Gulf of California and the wilderness peopled by hostile tribes of Indians, through which no Mexican force could penetrate. For its entire occupancy and defence, nothing would be required but a few small vessels of war stationed in the Gulf, and a single regiment to keep down any resistance from the few inhabitants within. From the Passo del Norte to the mouth of the river, a distance of a few hundred miles, a single fact will show what little force will be necessary to its defence. It was a frontier between Texas and Mexico, when the former had but an inconsiderable population—not more than an hundred and fifty thousand at the utmost, at any time—with no standing army, and but very few irregular troops; yet for several years she maintained this line without any, except slight occasional intrusion from Mexico, and that too when Mexico was far more consolidated in her power,

and when revolutions were not so frequent, and her money resources were far greater than at present. If, then, Texas alone, under such circumstances, could defend that frontier for so long a period, can any man believe that now, when she is backed by the whole of the United States, now that Mexico is exhausted, defeated, and prostrated—I repeat, can any man believe that it would involve as great a sacrifice to us of men and money, to defend that frontier, as did the last campaign? No. I hazard nothing in asserting, that, to defend it for an indefinite period, would have required a less sum than the interest on the money spent in the campaign, and fewer men than were sacrificed in carrying it on.

So much for the past. We now come to the commencement of another campaign, and the question recurs, what shall be done? The President, in his message, recommends the same line of policy—a vigorous prosecution of the war—not for conquest, that is again emphatically disavowed; not to blot Mexico out of the list of nations; no, he desires to see her an independent and flourishing community, and assigns strong reasons for it; but to obtain an honorable peace. We hear no more of conquering peace, but I presume that he means by an honorable peace the same thing; that is, to compel Mexico to agree to a treaty, ceding a sufficient part of her territory, as an indemnity for the expenses of the war, and for the claims of our citizens.

I have examined, with care, the grounds on which the President renews his recommendation, and am again compelled to dissent. There are many and powerful reasons, more so, even, than those that existed at the commencement of the last campaign, to justify my dissent. The sacrifice in money will be vastly greater. There is a bill for ten additional regiments now before the Senate, and another for twenty regiments of volunteers has been reported, authorizing in all the raising of an additional force of something upwards of thirty thousand. This, in addition to that already authorized by law, will be sufficient to keep an effective army in Mexico, of not much, if any, less than seventy thousand men, and will raise the expenses of the campaign to probably not less than sixty millions of dollars.

To meet so large an expenditure, would involve, in the present and prospective condition of the money market, it is to be apprehended, not a little embarrassment. Last year money was abundant, and easily obtained. An unfortunate famine in Europe created a great demand for our agricultural products. That turned the balance of trade greatly in our favor, and specie poured into the country with a strong and steady current. No inconsiderable portion of it passed into the Treasury, through the duties, which kept it full, in spite of the large sums remitted to meet the expenses of the war. The case is different now. Instead of having a tide flowing in, equal to the drain flowing out, the drain is now both ways. The exchanges now are against us, instead of being in our favor, and instead of specie flowing into the country from abroad, it is flowing out. In the mean time the price of stocks and Treasury notes, instead of being at or above par, have both fallen below, to a small extent. The effects of the depreciation of Treasury notes will cause them to pass into the Treasury in payment of the customs and other dues to the Government, as the cheaper currency, instead of gold and silver; while the expenses of the war, whether paid for by the transmission of gold and silver direct to Mexico, or by drafts drawn in favor of British merchants or other capitalists there, will cause whatever specie may be in the vaults of the Treasury to flow from it, either for remittance direct, on account of the ordinary transactions of the country, or to pay the drafts which may be drawn upon it, and which, when paid, in the present state of exchanges, will be remitted abroad. But this process of paying in Treasury notes, instead of gold and silver, and gold and silver flowing out in both directions, cannot continue long without exhausting its specie, and leaving nothing to meet the public expenditure, including those of the war, but Treasury notes. Can

they, under such circumstances, preserve even their present value? Is there not great danger that they will fall lower and lower, and finally involve the finances of the Government and the circulation of the country in the greatest embarrassment and difficulty?

Is there not great danger, with this prospect before us, and with the necessity of raising by loans near forty millions, of a commercial and financial crisis—even possibly a suspension by the banks. I wish not to create panic; but there is danger, which makes a great difference in a financial and monetized point of view, between the state of things now and at the commencement of the last session. Looking to the future, it is to be apprehended that not a little difficulty will have to be encountered in raising money to meet the expenses of the next campaign, if conducted on the large scale which is proposed. Men you may raise, but money will be found difficult to obtain. It is even to be apprehended that loans will have to be negotiated on very disadvantageous terms for the public. In the present state of things, if they grow no worse, there can be no resort to Treasury notes. They cannot be materially increased, without a ruinous depreciation, and a resort must be had, exclusively, or almost entirely so, to borrowing. But at the present prices of stocks, to borrow so large a sum as will be necessary, can only be done at a greatly increased rate of interest on the nominal amount of stock. In a recent conversation with a gentleman, well informed on this subject, he said, that in his opinion, if forty millions are required, a loan could not be had for more than ninety for one hundred, which would be about at the rate of seven per cent.

These are formidable objections, but they are not the only ones that are more so than they were at the commencement of the last campaign. I hold that the avowed object for the vigorous prosecution of the war is less certain of being realized *now*, than it was then; and if it should fail to be realized, it will leave our affairs in a far worse condition than they are at present. That object, as has been stated, is to obtain an honorable treaty; one which, to use the language of the President, will give indemnity for the past and security for the future—that is, a treaty which will give us a cession of territory, not only equal to our present demand for indemnity, but equal to the additional demand—equal to the entire expenses to be incurred in conducting the campaign; and a guarantee from the Government of Mexico for its faithful execution. Now, Senators, I hold that whether the war is successful or unsuccessful, there is not only no certainty that this object will be accomplished, but almost a certainty that it will not be. If the war be unsuccessful; if our arms should be baffled, as I trust and believe they will not be; but if, from any unfortunate accident, such should be the case, it is clear that we shall not be able to negotiate a treaty that will accomplish the object intended. On the contrary, if the war should be successful, it is almost equally certain that, in that case, the avowed object for prosecuting the war vigorously, will not be accomplished. I might take higher ground, and maintain that the more successfully the war is prosecuted, the more certainly the object avowed to be accomplished will be defeated, while the objects disavowed would as certainly be accomplished.

What is the object of a vigorous prosecution of the war? How can it be successful? I can see but one way of making it so, and that is by suppressing all resistance on the part of Mexico, overpowering and dispersing her army, and utterly overthrowing her Government. But if that should be done; if a vigorous prosecution of the war should lead to that result, how are we to obtain an honorable peace? With whom shall we treat for indemnity for the past and security for the future? War may be made by one party, but it requires two to make peace. If all authority is overthrown in Mexico, where will be the power to enter into negotiation and make peace? Our very success would defeat the

possibility of making peace. In that case the war would not end in peace, but in conquest; not in negotiation, but in subjugation; and defeat, I repeat, the very object you aim to accomplish, and accomplish that which you disavow to be your intention, by destroying the separate existence of Mexico, overthrowing her nationality, and blotting out her name from the list of nations, instead of leaving her a free Republic, which the President has so earnestly expressed his desire to do.

If I understand his Message correctly, I have his own authority for the conclusion to which I come. He takes very much the same view that I do, as to how a war ought to be prosecuted vigorously, and what would be its results, with the difference as to the latter, resting on a single contingency, and that a remote one. He says that the great difficulty of obtaining peace results from this, that the people of Mexico are divided under factious chieftains, and that the chief in power dare not make peace, because for doing so he would be displaced by a rival. He also says, that the only way to remedy this evil and to obtain a treaty, is to put down the whole of them, including the one in power, as well as the others. Well, what then? Are we to stop there? No. Our Generals are, it seems, authorized to encourage and to protect the well disposed inhabitants in establishing a republican Government. He says they are numerous, and are prevented from expressing their opinions and making an attempt to form such a Government, only by fear of those military chieftains. He proposes, when they have thus formed a Government, under the encouragement and protection of our army, to obtain peace by a treaty with the Government thus formed, which shall give us ample indemnity for the past and security for the future. I must say I am at a loss to see how a free and independent Republic can be established in Mexico under the protection and authority of its conquerors. I can readily understand how an aristocracy or a despotic Government might be, but how a free republican Government can be so established, under such circumstances, is to me incomprehensible. I had always supposed that such a Government must be the spontaneous wish of the people; that it must emanate from the hearts of the people, and be supported by their devotion to it, without support from abroad. But it seems that these are antiquated notions—obsolete ideas—and that free popular Governments may be made under the authority and protection of a conqueror.

But suppose these difficulties surmounted, how can we make a free Government in Mexico? Where are the materials? It is to be, I presume, a confederated Government like their former. Where is the intelligence in Mexico for the construction and preservation of such a Government? It is what she has been aiming at for more than twenty years, but so utterly incompetent are her people for the task, that it has been a complete failure from first to last. The great body of the intelligence and wealth of Mexico is concentrated in the priesthood, who are naturally disinclined to that form of Government; the residue, for the most part, are the owners of the haciendas, the larger planters of the country, but they are without concert and destitute of the means of forming such a Government. But if it were possible to establish such a Government, it could not stand without the protection of our army. It would fall as soon as it is withdrawn.

If it be determined to have a treaty, it would be a far preferable course, as it appears to me, to abstain from attacking or destroying the Government now existing in Mexico, and to treat with it, if indeed it be capable of forming a treaty which it could maintain and execute. Upon that point I do not profess to have any information beyond that derived from conversations with those who have been in Mexico; but from all that I can hear, it may be doubted, whether we have not already pushed, what is called a vigorous prosecution of the war so far, as not to leave sufficient power and influence in the Government to enter into a treaty which would be respected, when our forces are withdrawn. Such I know

to be the opinion of intelligent officers. They concur in thinking that the existing Government at Queretaro, if it should enter into a treaty in conformity with the views expressed by the Executive, would be overthrown, and that we should be compelled to defend that portion of Mexico which we require for indemnity, defensively, or be compelled to return and renew the prosecution of the war. If such is its weakness, it may be apprehended that even now, without pushing the vigorous prosecution of the war further, we are greatly exposed to the danger which these resolutions are intended to guard against, and that it requires great discretion and prompt action on our part to avoid it.

But before leaving this part of the subject, I must enter my solemn protest, as one of the Representatives of a State of this Union, against pledging protection to any Government established in Mexico under our countenance or encouragement. It would inevitably be overthrown as soon as our forces are withdrawn, and we would be compelled, in fulfilment of plighted faith, implied or expressed, to return and reinstate such Government in power, to be again overturned and again reinstated, until we should be compelled to take the Government into our own hands, just as the English have been compelled again and again to do in Hindostan, under similar circumstances, until it has led to its entire conquest. Let us avoid following the example which we have been condemning, as far back as my recollection extends.

The President himself entertains doubt, whether the plan of forming a Government in the manner which I have been considering, and treating with it for indemnity, may not fail. In that case, he agrees that the very course to which I have said the vigorous prosecution of the war will inevitably lead, must be taken. He says, after having attempted to establish such a Government—after having employed the best efforts to secure peace—if all fail, “we must hold on to the occupation of the country. We must take the full measure of indemnity into our own hands, and enforce such terms as the honor of the country demand.” These are his words. Now, what is this? Is it not an acknowledgement, that if he fails in establishing a Government with which he can treat, in Mexico—after putting down all resistance under the existing Government, we must make a conquest of the whole country, and hold it subject to our control? Can words be stronger? “Occupy the whole country”—“take the full measure of indemnity”—no defensive line—no treaty, and “enforce terms.” Terms on whom? On the Government? No, no, no. To enforce terms on the people individually. That is to say, to establish a Government over them in the form of a province.

The President is right. If the vigorous prosecution of the war should be successful, and the contingency on which he expects to make a treaty fails, there will be no retreat. Every argument against calling back the army and taking a defensive line will have double force, after having spent sixty millions of dollars, and acquired the possession of the whole of Mexico, and the interests in favor of keeping possession would be much more powerful then than now. The army itself will be larger—those who live by the war, the numerous contractors, the merchants, the sutlers, the speculators in land and mines, and all who are profiting directly or indirectly by its prosecution, will be adverse to retiring, and will swell the cry of holding on to our conquests. They constitute an immense body of vast influence, who are growing rich by what is impoverishing the rest of the country.

It is at this stage that the President speaks of taking the indemnity into our own hands. But why delay it until the whole country is subdued? Why not take it now? A part of Mexico would be a better indemnity now, than the whole of Mexico would be at the end of the next campaign, when sixty millions of dollars will be added to the present expenditures. We would indeed acquire a control over a much larger portion of her population, but we would

never be able to extort from them, by all the forms of taxation to which you can resort, a sum sufficient to pay the force necessary to hold them in subjection. That force must be a large one, not less certainly than forty thousand men, according to the opinion of the Senator from Mississippi, (Mr. DAVIS,) who must be regarded as a competent judge upon this point. He stated in debate the other day, that the army now there, exceeding that number, are in danger ; and urged, on that account, the immediate passage of the bill to raise ten regiments. On this subject, it is as well to speak out plainly at once. We shall never obtain indemnity for the expenditures of the war. They must come out of the pockets of the people of the United States ; and the longer the war is continued, and the more numerous our army, the greater will be the debt, and the heavier the burden imposed upon the country.

If these views be correct, the end of the policy recommended by the President, whether contemplated or not, will be to force the Government to adopt one or the other alternatives alluded to in these resolutions. With this impression, I cannot support the policy he recommends, for the reasons assigned in the first resolution. The first of these is, that it would be inconsistent with the avowed object for which the war has been prosecuted. That it would be so, is apparent from what has already been said. Since the commencement of the war until this time, the President has continually disavowed the intention of ever conquering Mexico, and subjecting her to our control. He has constantly proclaimed that the only object was indemnity, and that the war is prosecuted to obtain it by treaty. And yet, if the results should be as I have stated, the end will be, that what was disavowed will be accomplished, and what has been avowed to be its object, will be defeated. Such a result would be a deep and lasting impeachment of the sincerity or the intelligence of the Government—of its sincerity, because directly opposed to what it has continually and emphatically disavowed; or of its intelligence, for not perceiving what ought to have been so readily anticipated.

We have heard much of the reputation which our country has acquired by this war. I acknowledge it to the full amount, as far as the military is concerned. The army has done its duty nobly, and conferred high honors on the country, for which I sincerely thank them ; but I apprehend that the reputation acquired does not go beyond this, and that in other respects we have lost instead of acquiring reputation by the war. It would seem certain, from all publications from abroad, that the Government itself has not gained reputation in the eyes of the world, for justice, moderation, or wisdom. Whether this be deserved or not, it is not for me to inquire at present. I am now speaking merely of reputation; and in that view it appears that we have lost abroad, as much in civil and political reputation as we have acquired for our skill and valor in arms. But much as I regard military glory—as much as I rejoice to witness the display of that indomitable energy and courage which surmounts all difficulties—I would be sorry indeed that our Government should lose any portion of that high character, for justice, moderation, and discretion, which distinguished it in the early stages of our history.

The next reason assigned is, that either holding Mexico as a province, or incorporating her into the Union, would be unprecedented by any example in our history. We have conquered many of the neighboring tribes of Indians, but we have never thought of holding them in subjection, or of incorporating them into our Union. They have been left as an independent people in the midst of us, or been driven back into the forests. Nor have we ever incorporated into the Union any but the Caucasian race. To incorporate Mexico, would be the first departure of the kind; for more than half of its population are pure Indians, and by far the larger portion of the residue mixed blood. I protest against the incorporation of such a people. Ours is the Government of the white man. The

Me bring up  
the Brazilians  
10 because they still  
have slavery

great misfortune of what was formerly Spanish America, is to be traced to the fatal error of placing the colored race on an equality with the white. That error destroyed the social arrangement which formed the basis of their society. This error we have wholly escaped; the Brazilians, formerly a province of Portugal, have escaped also, to a considerable extent, and they and we are the only people of this continent who have made revolutions without anarchy. And yet, with this example before them, and our uniform practice, there are those among us who talk about erecting these Mexicans into territorial Governments, and placing them on an equality with the people of these States. I utterly protest against the project.

It is a remarkable fact, in this connection, that in the whole history of man, as far as my information extends, there is no instance whatever, of any civilized colored race, of any shade, being found equal to the establishment and maintenance of free Government, although by far the largest proportion of the human family is composed of them; and even in the savage state, we rarely find them anywhere with such Governments, except it be our noble savages; for noble I will call them, for their many high qualities. They, for the most part, had free institutions, but such institutions are much more easily sustained among a savage than a civilized people. Are we to overlook this great fact? Are we to associate with ourselves, as equals, companions, and fellow-citizens, the Indians and mixed races of Mexico? I would consider such association as degrading to ourselves, and fatal to our institutions.

The next remaining reasons assigned, that it would be in conflict with the genius and character of our Government, and, in the end, subversive of our free institutions, are intimately connected, and I shall consider them together.

That it would be contrary to the genius and character of our Government, and subversive of our free popular institutions, to hold Mexico as a subject province, is a proposition too clear for argument before a body so enlightened as the Senate. You know the American Constitution too well, you have looked into history, and are too well acquainted with the fatal effects which large provincial possessions have ever had on the institutions of free States, to need any proof to satisfy you how hostile it would be to the institutions of this country, to hold Mexico as a subject province. There is not an example on record of any free State holding a province of the same extent and population, without disastrous consequences. The nations conquered and held as a province, have, in time, retaliated by destroying the liberty of their conquerors, through the corrupting effect of extended patronage and irresponsible power. Such certainly would be our case. The conquest of Mexico would add so vastly to the patronage of this Government, that it would absorb the whole powers of the States; the Union would become an imperial power, and the States reduced to mere subordinate corporations. But the evil would not end there; the process would go on, and the power transferred from the States to the Union, would be transferred from the Legislative department to the Executive. All the immense patronage which holding it as a province would create, the maintenance of a large army, to hold it in subjection, and the appointment of a multitude of civil officers necessary to govern it, would be vested in him. The great influence which it would give the President, would be the means of controlling the Legislative department, and subjecting it to his dictation, especially when combined with the principle of proscription which has now become the established practice of the Government. The struggle to obtain the Presidential chair would become proportionably great—so great as to destroy the freedom of elections. The end would be anarchy or despotism, as certain as I am now addressing the Senate.

Let it not be said that Great Britain is an example to the contrary; that she holds provinces of vast extent and population, without materially impairing the liberty of the subject, or exposing the Government to violence, anarchy, confu-

sion, or corruption. It is so. But it must be attributed to the peculiar character of her Government. Of all Governments that ever existed, of a free character, the British far transcends them all in one particular, and that is, its capacity to bear patronage without the evils usually incident to it. She can bear more, in proportion to population and wealth, than any Government of that character that ever existed. I might even go further, and assert than despotism itself in its most absolute form. I will not undertake to explain why it is so. It will take me further from the course which I have prescribed for myself, than I desire ; but I will say, in a few words, that it results from the fact that her Executive and the House of Lords, (the conservative branches of her Government,) are both hereditary, while the other House of Parliament has a popular character. The Roman Government exceeded the British in its capacity for conquest. No Government ever did exist, and none probably ever will, which, in that particular, equalled it ; but its capacity to hold conquered provinces in subjection, was as nothing compared to that of Great Britain ; and hence, when the Roman power passed beyond the limits of Italy, crossed the Adriatic; the Mediterranean, and the Alps, liberty fell prostrate ; the Roman people became a rabble ; corruption penetrated every department of the Government ; violence and anarchy ruled the day, and military despotism closed the scene. Now, on the contrary, we see England, with subject-provinces of vastly greater territorial extent, and probably of not inferior population, (I have not compared them;) we see her, I repeat, going on without the personal liberty of the subject being materially impaired, or the Government subject to violence or anarchy ! Yet England has not wholly escaped the curse which must ever befall a free Government which holds extensive provinces in subjection ; for, although she has not lost her liberty, or fallen into anarchy, yet we behold the population of England crushed to the earth by the superincumbent weight of debt and taxation, which may one day terminate in revolution. The wealth derived from her conquests and provincial possessions may have contributed to swell the overgrown fortunes of the upper classes, but has done nothing to alleviate the pressure on the laboring masses below. On the contrary, the expense incident to their conquest, and of governing and holding them in subjection, have been drawn mainly from their labor, and have increased instead of decreasing the weight of the pressure. It has placed a burden upon them which, with all their skill and industry, with all the vast accumulation of capital and power of machinery with which they are aided, they are scarce capable of bearing, without being reduced to the lowest depths of poverty. Take, for example, Ireland, her earliest and nearest conquest, and is it not to this day a cause of heavy expense, and a burden, instead of a source of revenue.

On the contrary, our Government, in this particular, is the very reverse of the British. Of all free Governments, it has the least capacity, in proportion to the wealth and population of the country, to bear patronage. The genius of the two, in this particular, is precisely opposite, however much alike in exterior forms and other particulars. The cause of this difference, I will not undertake to explain on the present occasion. It results from its federal character and elective Chief Magistrate ; and so far from the example of Great Britain constituting a safe precedent for us to follow, the little she has gained from her numerous conquests and vast provincial possessions, and the heavy burdens which it has imposed upon her people to meet the consequent expenses, ought to be to us a warning never to be forgotten ; especially when we reflect that from the nature of our Government, that we would be so liable to the other and greater evils from which she, from the nature of her Government, is, in a great measure, exempted. Such and so weighty are the objections to conquering Mexico, and holding it as a subject-province.

Nor are the reasons less weighty against incorporating her into the Union. As far as law is concerned, that is easily done. All that is necessary is to establish a Territorial Government for the several States in Mexico, of which there are upwards of twenty, to appoint governors, judges, and magistrates, and to give to the population a subordinate right of making laws, we defraying the cost of the Government. So far as legislation goes, the work will be done; but there would be a great difference between these Territorial Governments, and those which we have heretofore established within our own limits. These are only the offsets of our own people, or foreigners from the same countries from which our ancestors came. The first settlers in the Territories are too few in number to form and support a Government of their own, and are under obligation to the Government of the United States, for forming one for them, and defraying the expense of maintaining it; knowing as they do that when they have sufficient population, they will be permitted to form a constitution for themselves, and be admitted as a member of the Union. During the period of their Territorial Government, no force is necessary to keep them in a state of subjection. The case will be entirely different with these Mexican Territories; when you form them, you must have powerful armies to hold them in subjection, with all the expenses incident to supporting them. You may call them Territories, but they would, in reality, be but provinces under another name, and would involve the country in all the difficulties and dangers which I have already shown would result from holding the country in that condition. How long this state of things would last, before they would be fitted to be incorporated into the Union as States, we may form some idea, from similar instances with which we are familiar. Ireland has been held in subjection by England for many centuries, and yet remains hostile, although her people are of a kindred race with the conquerors. The French colony in Canada still entertain hostile feelings towards their conquerors, although living in the midst of them for nearly one hundred years. If we may judge from these examples, it would not be unsafe to conclude that the Mexicans never will be heartily reconciled to our authority. The better class have Castilian blood in their veins, and are of the old Gothic stock—quite equal to the Anglo-Saxons in many respects, and in some superior. Of all the people upon earth, they are the most pertinacious; they hold out longer, and often when there would seem to be no prospect of ever making effectual resistance. It is admitted, I believe, on all hands, that they are now universally hostile to us, and the probability is, will continue so.

But suppose this difficulty removed. Suppose their hostility should cease, and they should become desirous of being incorporated in our Union. Ought we to admit them? Are the Mexicans fit to be politically associated with us? Are they fit not only to govern themselves, but for governing us also? Are any of you Senators, willing that your State should constitute a member of a Union, of which twenty odd Mexican States, more than one-third of the whole, would be a part, the far greater part of the inhabitants of which are pure Indians, not equal in intelligence and elevation of character to the Cherokees, Choctaws, or any of our Southern Indian tribes?

We make a great mistake in supposing all people are capable of self government. Acting under that impression, many are anxious to force free Governments on all the people of this continent, and over the world, if they had the power. It has been lately urged in a very respectable quarter, that it is the mission of this country to spread civil and religious liberty over all the globe, and especially over this continent—even by force, if necessary. It is a sad delusion. None but a people advanced to a high state of moral and intellectual excellence are capable in a civilized condition, of forming and maintaining free Governments; and among those who are so far advanced, very few indeed have had the good fortune to form constitutions capable of endurance. It is a remark-

able fact in the political history of man, that there is scarcely an instance of a free constitutional Government, which has been the work exclusively of foresight and wisdom. They have all been the result of a fortunate combination of circumstances. It is a very difficult task to make a Constitution worthy of being called so. This admirable federal Constitution of ours, is the result of such a combination. It is superior to the wisdom of any or all of the men by whose agency it was made. The force of circumstances, and not foresight or wisdom, induced them to adopt many of its wisest provisions.

But of the few nations who have been so fortunate as to adopt a wise Constitution, still fewer have had the wisdom long to preserve them. It is harder to preserve than to obtain liberty. After years of prosperity, the tenure by which it is held, is but too often forgotten; and I fear, Senators, that such is the case with us. There is no solicitude now about liberty. It was not so in the early days of the Republic. Then it was the first object of our solicitude. The maxim then was, that "power is always stealing from the many to the few;" "the price of liberty is perpetual vigilance." Then no question of any magnitude came up, in which the first inquiry was not "is it constitutional?"—"is it consistent with our free, popular institutions?"—"how is it to affect our liberty." It is not so now. Questions of the greatest magnitude are now discussed without reference or allusion to these vital considerations. I have been often struck with the fact, that in the discussions of the great questions in which we are now engaged, relating to the origin and the conduct of this war, their effect on the free institutions and the liberty of the people have scarcely been alluded to, although their bearing in that respect is so direct and disastrous. They would, in former days, have been the great and leading topics of discussion; and would, above all others, have had the most powerful effect in arousing the attention of the country. But now, other topics occupy the attention of Congress and of the country—military glory, extension of the empire, and the aggrandizement of the country. To what is this great change to be attributed? Is it because there has been a decay of the spirit of liberty among the people? I think not. I believe that it was never more ardent. The true cause is, that we have ceased to remember the tenure by which liberty alone can be preserved. We have had so many years of prosperity—passed through so many difficulties and dangers without the loss of liberty—that we begin to think that we hold it by right divine from heaven itself. Under this impression, without thinking or reflecting, we plunge into war, contract heavy debts, increase vastly the patronage of the Executive, and indulge in every species of extravagance, without thinking that we expose our liberty to hazard. It is a great and fatal mistake. The day of retribution will come; and when it does, awful will be the reckoning, and heavy the responsibility somewhere.

I have now shown, Senators, that the conquest of Mexico, and holding it as a subject-province, or incorporating it into our Union, is liable to the many and irresistible objections assigned in the first resolution. I have also shown that the policy recommended by the President, if carried out, would terminate, in all probability, in its conquest, and holding it either in one or the other mode stated; and that such is the opinion of the President himself, unless in the mean time, peace can be obtained. Believing, then, that this line of policy might lead to consequences so disastrous, it ought not, in my opinion, in the language of the second resolution, to be adopted. Thus thinking, I cannot give it my support. The question is then presented—What should be done? It is a great and difficult question, and daily becoming more so. I, who have used every effort in my power to prevent this war, might excuse myself from answering it, and leave it to those who have incurred greater responsibility in relation to it. But I will not shrink from any responsibility where the safety of the country or its institutions are at stake.

The first consideration in determining what line of policy, in the present state of things, ought to be adopted, is to decide what line will most effectually guard against the dangers which I have shown would result from the conquest of Mexico, and the disastrous consequences which would follow it.

After the most mature reflection which I have been able to give to the subject, I am of opinion now, and have been from the first, that the only one by which it can be certainly guarded against, is to take the question of indemnity in our own hands—to occupy defensively, and hold subject to negotiation, a portion of the territory of Mexico, which we may deem ample to cover all proper claims upon her, and which will be best suited to us to acquire, and least disadvantageous to her to lose. Such was my impression when the message of the President of the United States recommended to Congress the recognition of the existence of a war with Mexico. My view, at that time, as to the proper course to be pursued, was to vote the supplies, to rescue Gen. Taylor and his army from the dangers which surrounded them, and take time to determine whether we should recognise the war or not. Had it been adopted, I would have insisted on raising a provisional army, to be collected at some proper point, and to be trained and disciplined: but to postpone the declaration of war until the Congress of Mexico, in which, according to her Constitution, the war-making power resided, should be allowed time to disavow the intention of making war on us, and to adjust all differences between the two countries. But if she refused, even then I would have advised to seize, by way of reprisal, the portion of her territory which we might select, and hold it defensively, as I have just stated, instead of declaring war formally against her; and that mainly for the purpose of avoiding the very dangers against which these resolutions are intended to guard. But such was the urgency which was supposed then to exist, that no time was allowed to present or press these views upon the Senate. Such a course, besides the saving of an immense sacrifice of men and money, and avoiding the many other evils to which the course adopted has already subjected the country, would have effectually prevented our being entangled in the affairs of Mexico, from which we find it now so difficult to extricate ourselves. This consideration alone gives it decisive advantages over the course adopted, and makes it vastly superior, even if it should involve the same sacrifice of men and money to maintain a defensive line, as would, to use the usual phrase, the vigorous prosecution of the war. Mexico is to us as a dead body, and this is the only way that we can cut the cord which binds us to the corpse.

In recommending this line of policy, I look not to the interests of Mexico, but to those of our own country, and to the preservation of its free popular institutions. With me, the liberty of the country is all in all. If that be preserved, every thing will be preserved; but if lost, all will be lost. To preserve it, it is indispensable to adopt a course of moderation and justice towards all other countries; to avoid war whenever it can be avoided; to let those great causes which are now at work, and which, by the mere operation of time, will raise our country to an elevation and influence which no country has ever heretofore attained. By pursuing such a course, we may succeed in combining greatness and liberty—the highest possible greatness with the largest measure of liberty—and do more to extend liberty by our example over this continent and the world generally, than would be done by a thousand victories. It may be, in expressing these sentiments, that I find no response in the breasts of those around me. If so, it must be attributed to the fact that I am growing old, and that my principles and feelings belong to a period of thirty or thirty-five years anterior to the present date. It is not, however, the first time I have ventured in their maintenance to stand alone on this floor. When General Jackson, some years since, during the latter part of his Administration, recommended to Congress to issue letters of marque and reprisal against France, I stood alone in my place here, and raised my voice against

it, on the ground that there was no just cause of war with her ; that in entering into the treaty to indemnify our citizens for old claims against her, the King of France and his Ministers declared to our Minister, that it required a vote of the Chambers to make the appropriation to carry it into effect ; and that they were no further responsible than to use their best efforts to induce them to do so. This was all communicated to our Executive, and the treaty accepted and ratified, with this condition attached. And yet the President, although he admitted that the King and his Ministers had fully redeemed their pledge to use their best efforts to obtain the necessary appropriation, recommended the adoption of the measure to which I have alluded, and which would have been tantamount to war. Fortunately the Government of Great Britain, by her interposition, prevented it. This example, I fear, has contributed much to give the strong tendency, which we have since witnessed, to resort to menace and force in the settlement of our differences with other powers.

According to my opinion, all parties are interested in adopting a line of policy which will with certainty disentangle us from the affairs of Mexico, and avoid the great sacrifices of men and money, and the many other evils to which the war exposes us. Let me say to my friends, who support the Administration in their policy, that if you persist, and if peace by some good fortune should not be obtained, the war will go on from year to year, and you will be utterly overthrown as a party. Do you not see that its effects, in reference to our internal affairs, is to drive you into a course of policy directly contrary to that which you have professed to support, and in favor of that which you have charged your opponents with supporting. You have ever professed to oppose, as a party, a national debt, and charged your opponents with being its advocates. But what, I ask, are the effects of the war in this respect ? Is it not to create an immense national debt, greater than that which the party which you are opposed could possibly have created by any other policy, had they been in power. This campaign, on which you look so lightly, will add to it a sum more than half as great as the entire debt of the revolution. You have been opposed to the extension of the patronage of the Executive, at least in profession. But this war is doing more to enlarge his patronage than any other policy which your opponents could have adopted. You profess to be in favor of a metallic currency. Do you not see that, with the increase of stocks and Treasury notes, you are in danger of being plunged again into the lowest depths of the paper system ? You, as a party, have advocated the doctrine of free trade. Do you not see that, by the vast increase of the expenditures of the country, and the heavy interest which you will have to pay on the public debt, you are creating a necessity of increasing the duties on imports to the highest point that revenue will admit, and thus depriving the country of all the practical benefits of free trade, and preventing the Government from making any material reduction, until the whole debt is paid, which cannot be expected during this generation ? What could your opponents have done more, or even as much, to destroy a system of policy which you claim to distinguish you from them, and to establish that which you allege to be the reason why they should be excluded from power ? Has not, and will not, this war policy, if persisted in, effectually and finally obliterate the line of policy which you have insisted as distinguishing you from them ? Why, then, to save yourselves from such a result, do you hesitate to adopt the course of policy I have suggested, as the only certain means of preventing these and other evils, and the danger to which our institutions are exposed ? The pride of opinion may resist. I know the difficulty, and respect it, with which we yield measures that we have advocated, even when time has shown them to be wrong. But, true magnanimity and the highest honor command that we should abandon them, when they threaten to be injurious instead of beneficial to the country. It would do great credit to the

party in power to adopt the policy now, in reference to the war, of taking indemnity into our own hands, by assuming a defensive position, which, it can hardly be doubted they would have done when the war was recognised, if they had foreseen the difficulties and dangers to which it has led. It would be a noble sacrifice of individual pride to patriotism.

In asserting that the only alternative is between the policy recommended by the President and the adoption of a defensive position, I have put out of the question the policy of taking no territory. I have done so, because I believe the voice of the country has decided irrevocably against it, and that to press it as the alternative, would render almost certain the final adoption of the policy recommended by the President, notwithstanding the disasters which it threatens. Let me say to my friends on the other side of the chamber, (for as such I regard them, for political differences here do not affect our personal relations,) that they have contributed by their course to fix the determination not to terminate the war without some suitable indemnity in territory. I do not refer to your vote recognising the existence of war between the Republic of Mexico and the United States. I well know that you voted with a view to furnish immediate support to General Taylor and his army, then surrounded by imminent danger, and not with the intention of recognising the war, and that you remonstrated and protested against that interpretation being put upon your votes. But since it passed, and the war was recognised, most of you have continued to vote for appropriations to prosecute the war, when the object of prosecuting it was avowed to be to acquire territory as an indemnity. Now, I cannot see how the two can be reconciled—how you can refuse to take indemnity in territory, when you have voted means for the express purpose of obtaining such indemnity. The people are not able to understand why you should vote money so profusely to get indemnity, and refuse to take it, when obtained; and hence public opinion has been brought so decidedly to the conclusion not to terminate the war without territorial indemnity. But if such indemnity is to be had without involving the hazard of conquering the country, with all the dangers to which it would expose us, we must decide whether we shall adopt a defensive position or not, now—this very session. It will, in all probability, be too late at the next.

I have now, Senators, delivered my sentiments with freedom and candor, upon all the questions connected with these resolutions. I propose nothing now. But if I find that I will be supported, I will move to raise a Committee to deliberate upon the subject of the defensive line.

The opportunity is favorable, while there are so many officers from Mexico now in the city, whose opinion would be of great value in determining on the one to be adopted. If the course of policy which I have suggested should be adopted, we may not get peace immediately. The war may still continue for some time; but be that as it will, it will accomplish the all-important object—will extricate the country from its entanglement with Mexico.

F. D. C. / Oct 19<sup>th</sup> 1847







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